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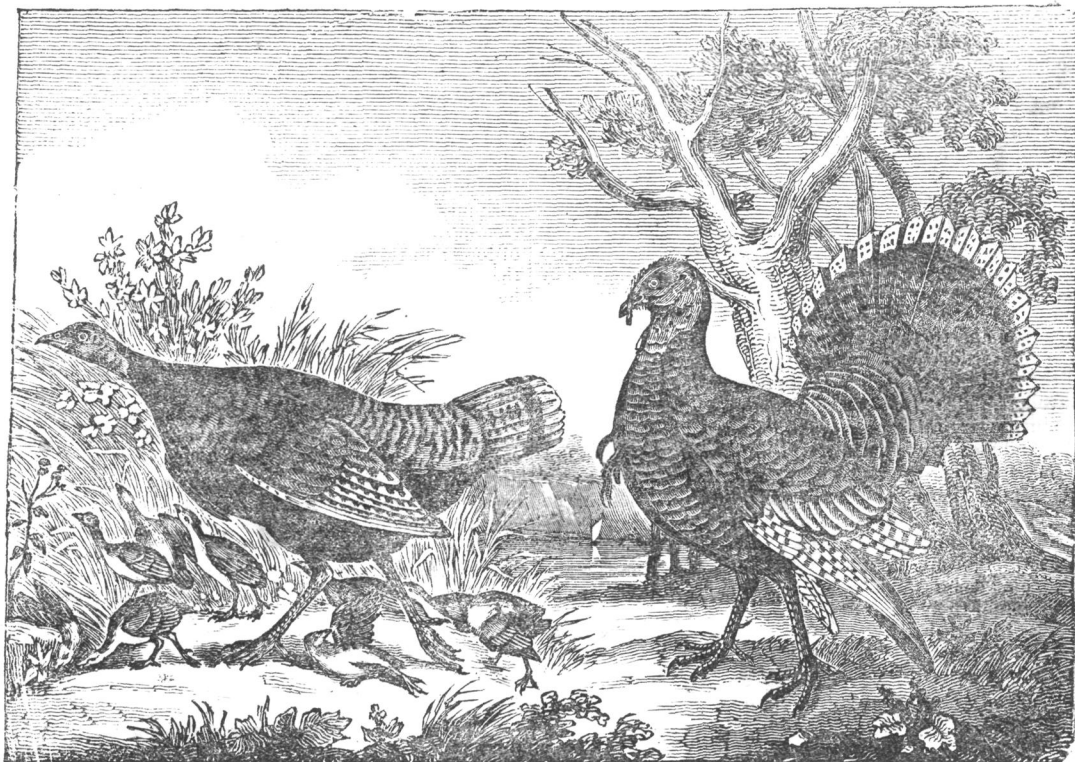
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THE TURKEY—MELEAGRIS GALLOPAVO.—*Linnaeus*.

ORNITHOLOGY.

In some former numbers of our Journal we took occasion to notice the preceding volumes of the work, from which we copy the above engraving.* The present, "Vol. III—Ornithology," is devoted to the "Natural History of the Gallinaceous Birds"—an order which includes all the game birds and all our domestic poultry, to which is prefixed an interesting memoir of the father of natural science, ARISTOTLE, by the Rev. Andrew Crichton.

Whether regarded in a scientific, a moral, or a commercial point of view, Ornithology is a department of natural history which deserves particular attention; and from the very pleasing manner in which it is brought forward in such works as the one before us, there can be no question it will become a greater favourite with students than it has heretofore been. Formerly the science was so involved in technicalities, and in general treated of in so dry and uninteresting a way, that but few were induced to take it up for the purpose of recreation or pleasure. Such is not the case at present. To scientific information is added such interesting details relative to the instincts and habits of the animals or birds of which engravings are given, as must render the study pleasing to all tastes and disposi-

tions. With the natural history of the Turkey our young readers, we have no doubt, will be much amused and gratified; and as they occasionally observe them strutting through the poultry yard, will bring to mind from whence they were originally brought, and will thus have an instance furnished, that to the exertions of travellers and navigators we are indebted not only for a great proportion of the luxuries, but even what may now be termed the necessities of life.

"Although the turkey is one of the most important of the feathered race in the luxury and domestic economy of man, the exact period of its introduction into Europe and to Great Britain has been lost sight of, and by the older naturalists attempting to recognise in it some of the poultry of the ancients, it was conjectured to have come originally from India and Africa, and the knowledge of its native country was, even for a considerable time, placed in uncertainty.

"The wild turkey should have been the emblem of North America, and so thought Benjamin Franklin. The turkey is the national bird, truly indigenous, and not found beyond the limits of that continent: he is the herald of the morning, and around the log-house of the squatter, must convey associations similar to those produced by the crowing of the cock around the cottage of the European farmer. 'I was awakened,' says Bartram, 'in the morning early, by the cheering converse of the wild turkey cocks saluting each other from the sun-brightened tops of the lofty cypress and magnolia. They begin at early dawn, and continue till sunrise. The high forests ring with the noise of these social sentinels, the

* The Naturalist's Library, by Sir William Jardine, Bart., F. R. S. E., F. L. S., &c. &c. Edinburgh: W. H. Lizars, and Stirling and Kenney; Longman, Rees, Orme, Browne, Green, and Longman, London; and W. Curry, jun. and Co., Dublin.

watchword being caught and repeated, from one to another, for hundreds of miles around, insomuch that the whole country is, for an hour or more, in an universal shout; or, in the poetry of Southey,

on the top
Of yon magnolia, the loud turkey's voice
Is heralding the dawn; from tree to tree
Extends the wakening watch-notes, far and wide,
Till the whole woodlands echo with the cry.

"There can be little doubt that we are indebted to the Spaniards for the introduction of the turkey to Europe, and that it would be brought from Mexico upon the discovery of the New World. From Spain a bird of such value, and so easily domesticated, would easily find its way to Britain; and although we cannot trace its introduction, we may confidently assert that it was not before 1525, and most probably between that and the year 1550.

"A person who has seen the turkey only in the poultry-yards of this country, can have no idea of the splendour of a fine cock in his full plumage, previous to the breeding season. His plumage gleams with the brightest golden-bronze, tinged, according to the position, with blue, violet, and green, and beautifully broken by the deep black bands which terminate each feather, and which also have a metallic lustre. The length of the male figured by Mr. Audubon was four feet and an inch; the expanse of the wings five feet eight inches. This is beyond the average size and the bird was a remarkably fine specimen.—The extraordinary accounts of the great weight and size of the wild turkey have been only the licensed tales of travellers, heightened by the idea, that a New World must produce every thing on a scale proportioned to its extent. Mr. Audubon says, that from 15lb. to 18lb. may be a fair estimate of their average weight; and he only once saw one in the Louisville market which weighed 36lb.: the tuft of hair on the breast of this bird measured upwards of a foot. Bonaparte confirms this account, but says that birds of 30lb. are not rare, and had ascertained the existence of some which weighed 40lb. The male turkey may be said to be adult at the third year, though it increases in both beauty and weight for some seasons afterwards. Upon the approach of the first winter, the bunch of hair upon the breast begins to appear: at the commencement of the second, it is from three to four inches in length, and the caruncles about the head and neck have become large, and have assumed their deep and livid hue: by the third winter, all these marks of maturity have nearly reached their greatest development.

"We shall now introduce the account of their manners from the Prince of Musignano's continuation.

"The males, usually termed *gobblers*, associate in parties, numbering from ten to a hundred, and seek their food apart from the females; whilst the latter either move about singly with their young, then nearly two-thirds grown, or, in company with other females and their families, form troops, sometimes consisting of seventy or eighty individuals, all of which are intent on avoiding the old males, who, whenever opportunity offers, attack and destroy the young, by repeated blows on the skull. All parties, however, travel in the same direction, and on foot, unless they are compelled to seek their individual safety by flying from the hunter's dog, or their march is impeded by a large river. When about to cross a river, they select the highest eminences, that their flight may be the more certain; and here they sometimes remain for a day or more, as if for the purpose of consultation, or to be duly prepared for so hazardous a voyage. During this time the males *gobble* obstreperously, and strut with extraordinary importance, as if they would animate their companions, and inspire them with the utmost degree of hardihood; the females and young also assume much of the pompous air of the males, the former spreading their tails, and moving silently around. At length the assembled multitude mount to the tops of the highest trees, whence, at a signal note from a leader, the whole together wing their way to the opposite shore. All the old and fat ones cross without difficulty, even when the river exceeds a mile in width; but the young, meagre, and weak, frequently fall short of the desired landing, and are

forced to swim for their lives; this they do dexterously enough, spreading their tails for a support, closing their wings to the body, stretching the neck forwards, and striking out quickly and forcibly with their legs. If in thus endeavouring to regain the land, they approach an elevated or inaccessible bank, their exertions are remitted, they resign themselves to the stream for a short time, in order to gain strength, and then, with one violent effort escape from the water. But in this attempt all are not successful; some of the weaker, as they cannot rise sufficiently high in the air to clear the bank, fall again and again into the water, and thus miserably perish. Immediately after these birds have succeeded in crossing a river, they for some time ramble about without any apparent unanimity of purpose, and a great many are destroyed by the hunters, although they are then least valuable.

"When the turkeys have arrived in their land of abundance, they disperse in small flocks, composed of individuals of all sexes and ages intermingled, who devour all the mast as they advance; this occurs about the middle of November. It has been observed, that, after these long journeys, the turkeys become so familiar as to venture on the plantations, and even approach so near the farm-houses as to enter the stables and corn-cribs in search of food; in this way they pass the autumn, and part of the winter. During this season great numbers are killed by the inhabitants, who preserve them in a frozen state, in order to transport them to a distant market.

"Early in March they begin to pair; and, for a short time previous, the females separate from, and shun their mates, though the latter pertinaciously follow them, uttering their gobbling note. The sexes roost apart, but at no great distance, so that, when the female utters a call, every male within hearing responds, rolling note after note, in the most rapid succession; not as when spreading the tail and strutting near the hen, but in a voice resembling that of the tame turkey, when he hears any unusual or frequently repeated noise. Where the turkeys are numerous, the woods, from one end to the other, sometimes for hundreds of miles, resound with this remarkable voice of their wooing, uttered responsively from their roosting places. This is continued for about an hour; and, on the rising of the sun, they silently descend from their perches, and the males begin to strut, for the purpose of winning the admiration of their mates.

"If the call be given from the ground, the males in the vicinity fly towards the individual, and, whether they perceive her or not, erect and spread their tails, throw the head backwards, distend the comb and wattles, strut pompously, and rustle their wings and body-feathers, at the same moment ejecting a puff of air from the lungs.—Whilst thus occupied, they occasionally halt to look out for the female, and then resume their strutting and puffing, moving with as much rapidity as the nature of their gait will admit. During this ceremonious approach, the males often encounter each other, and desperate battles ensue, when the conflict is only terminated by the flight or death of the vanquished."

"The conqueror now selects the objects of his gallantry, and one or more females thus associated follow their favourite, and roost in his immediate neighbourhood, if not upon the same tree, until they begin to lay, when they change their mode of life, in order to save their eggs, which the male uniformly breaks, if in his power. After the love season, the sexes again separate, the males cease entirely to gobble, and retire and conceal themselves by prostrate trees, in secluded parts of the forest, or in the almost impenetrable privacy of a cane-brake. Rather than leave their hiding-places, they suffer themselves to be approached within a short distance, when they seek safety in their speed of foot; at this season, however, they are of no value to the hunter, being meagre and covered with ticks. By thus retiring, using very little exercise, and feeding on peculiar grasses, they recover their flesh and strength, when they again congregate, and recommence their rambles.

"About the middle of April, when the weather is dry, the female selects a proper place in which to deposit her eggs, secured from the encroachment of water, and, as far as possible, concealed from the watchful eye of the crow:

this crafty bird spies the hen going to her nest, and having discovered the precious deposit, waits for the absence of the parent, and removes every one of the eggs from the spot, that he may devour them at leisure. The nest is placed on the ground, either on a dry ridge, in the fallen top of a dead leafy tree, under a thicket of sumach or briars, or by the side of a log; it is of a very simple structure, being composed of a few dried leaves. In this receptacle the eggs are deposited, sometimes to the number of twenty, but more usually from nine to fifteen; they are whitish, spotted with reddish brown, like those of the domestic bird. Their manner of building, number of eggs, period of incubation, &c. appear to correspond throughout the Union, as I have received exactly similar accounts from the northern limits of the turkey range, to the most southern regions of Florida, Louisiana, and the western wilds of Missouri.

"The female always approaches her nest with great caution, varying her course so as rarely to reach it twice by the same route; and, on leaving her charge, she is very careful to cover the whole with dry leaves, with which she conceals it so artfully, as to make it extremely difficult, even for one who has watched her movements, to indicate the exact spot; hence few nests are found, and these are generally discovered by fortuitously starting the female from them, or by the appearance of broken shells, scattered around by some cunning lynx, fox, or crow. When laying or sitting, the turkey hen is not readily driven from her post by the approach of apparent danger; but, if an enemy appears, she crouches as low as possible, and suffers it to pass. A circumstance related by Mr. Audubon will show how much intelligence they display on such occasions; having discovered a sitting hen, he remarked that, by assuming a careless air, whistling, or talking to himself, he was permitted to pass within five or six feet of her; but, if he advanced cautiously, she would not suffer him to come within twenty paces, but ran off twenty or thirty yards with her tail expanded, when, assuming a stately gait, she paused on every step, occasionally uttering a chuck. They seldom abandon their nests on account of being discovered by man; but should a snake, or any other animal, suck one of the eggs, the parent leaves them altogether. If the eggs be removed, she again seeks the male, and recommences laying, though otherwise she lays but one nest of eggs during the season. Several turkey hens sometimes associate, perhaps for mutual safety, deposit their eggs in the same nest, and rear their broods together. Mr. Audubon once found three females sitting on forty-two eggs. In such cases the nest is constantly guarded by one of the parties, so that no crow, raven, nor even pole-cat dares approach it.

"The mother will not forsake her eggs, when near hatching, while life remains; she will suffer an enclosure to be made around and imprison her, rather than abandon her charge. Mr. Audubon witnessed the hatching of a brood, while thus endeavouring to secure the young and brood. 'I have lain flat,' says he, 'within a very few feet, and seen her gently rise from the eggs, look anxiously towards them, chuck with a sound peculiar to the mother on such an occasion, remove carefully each half empty shell, and with her bill caress and dry the younglings, that already stand tottering and attempting to force their way out of the nest.'

"When the process of incubation is ended, and the mother is about to retire from the nest with her young brood, she shakes herself violently, picks and adjusts the feathers about the belly, and assumes a different aspect; her eyes are alternately inclined obliquely upwards and sideways; she stretches forth her neck in every direction, to discover birds of prey or other enemies; her wings are partially spread, and she softly clucks to keep her tender offspring close to her side. They proceed slowly, and, as the hatching generally occurs in the afternoon, they sometimes return to pass the night in the nest. While very young, the mother leads them to elevated dry places, as if aware that humidity, during the first few days of their life, would be very dangerous to them, they having then no other protection than a delicate, soft, hairy down. In very rainy seasons wild turkeys are scarce, because, when completely wetted, the young rarely survive.

"At the expiration of about two weeks, the young leave the ground on which they had previously reposed at night under the female, and follow her to some low, large branch of a tree, where they nestle under the broadly curved wings of their vigilant and fostering parent. The time then approaches in which they seek the open ground or prairie land during the day, in search of strawberries, and subsequently of dewberries, blackberries, and grasshoppers; thus securing a plentiful food, and enjoying the influence of the genial sun. They frequently dust themselves in shallow cavities of the soil, or on ant-hills, in order to clean off the loose skin of their growing feathers, and rid themselves of ticks and other vermin.

"The young turkeys now grow rapidly, and in the month of August, when several broods flock together, and are led by their mothers to the forest, they are stout and quite able to secure themselves from the unexpected attacks of wolves, foxes, lynxes, and even cougars, by rising quickly from the ground, aided by their strong legs, and reaching with ease the upper limbs of the tallest tree.—Amongst the numerous enemies of the wild turkey, the most dreaded are the large diurnal and nocturnal birds of prey, and the lynx (*Felis rufa*), who sucks their eggs, and is extremely expert at seizing both parent and young; he follows them for some distance, in order to ascertain their course, and then, making a rapid circular movement, places himself in ambush before them, and waits until, by a single bound, he can fasten on his victim.

"The following circumstance is related by Bartram: 'Having seen a flock of turkeys at some distance, I approached them with great caution, when, singling out a large cock, and being just on the point of firing, I observed that several young cocks were affrighted, and in their language warned the rest to be on their guard against an enemy, who I plainly perceived was industriously making his subtle approaches towards them, behind the fallen trunk of a tree, about twenty yards from me. This cunning fellow-hunter was a large fat wild cat or lynx; he saw me, and at times seemed to watch my motions, as if determined to seize the delicious prey before me; upon which I changed my object, and levelled my piece at him. At that instant my companion, at a distance, also discharged his piece, the report of which alarmed the flock of turkeys, and my fellow-hunter, the cat, sprang over the log, and trotted off.'

"These birds are guardians of each other, and the first who sees a hawk or eagle, gives a note of alarm, on which all within hearing lie close to the ground. As they usually roost in flocks, perched on the naked branches of trees, they are easily discovered by the large owls, and, when attacked by these prowling birds, often escape by a somewhat remarkable manœuvre. The owl sails around the spot to select his prey; but, notwithstanding the almost inaudible action of his pinions, the quick ear of one of the slumberers perceives the danger, which is immediately announced to the whole party by a *chuck*; thus alarmed, they rise on their legs, and watch the motions of the owl, who, darting like an arrow, would inevitably secure the individual at which he aimed, did not the latter suddenly drop his head, squat, and spread his tail over his back; the owl then glances over without inflicting any injury, at the very instant that the turkey suffers himself to fall headlong towards the earth, where he is secure from his dreaded enemy.

"On hearing the slightest noise, wild turkeys conceal themselves in the grass, or among shrubs, and thus frequently escape the hunter, or the sharp-sighted birds of prey. The sportsman is unable to find them during the day, unless he has a dog trained for the purpose; it is necessary to shoot them at a very short distance, since, when only wounded, they quickly disappear, and, accelerating their motion by a sort of half flight, run with so much speed, that the swiftest hunter cannot overtake them. The traveller, driving rapidly down the declivity of one of the Alleghanies, may sometimes see several of them before him, that evince no urgent desire to get out of the road; but on alighting, in hopes of shooting them, he soon finds that all pursuit is vain.

"In the spring, when the males are much emaciated by their attendance on the females, it may sometimes happen

that in cleared countries, they can be overtaken by a swift cur-dog, when they will squat, and suffer themselves to be caught by the dog or hunter, who follows on horseback. But from the knowledge we have gained of this bird, we do not hesitate to affirm, that the manner of running down turkeys, like hares or foxes, so much talked of, is a mere fable, as such a sport would be attended with very trifling success. A turkey hound will sometimes lead his master several miles, before he can a second time *flush* the same individual from his concealment; and even on a fleet horse, after following one for hours, it is often found impossible to *put it up*. During a fall of melting snow, turkeys will travel extraordinary distances, and are often pursued in vain by any description of hunters; they have then a long straddling manner of running, very easy to themselves, but which few animals can equal. This disposition for running, during rains or humid weather, is common to all gallinaceous birds.

“The males are frequently decoyed within gun-shot, in the breeding season, by forcibly drawing the air through one of the wing bones, producing a sound very similar to the voice of the female; but the performer on this simple instrument must commit no error, for turkeys are quick of hearing, and, when frequently alarmed, are wary and cunning. Some of these will answer to the call without advancing a step, and thus defeat the speculations of the hunter, who must avoid making any movement, inasmuch as a single glance of a turkey may defeat his hopes of decoying them. By imitating the cry of the barred owl (*Strix nebulosa*), the hunter discovers many on their roosts, as they will reply by a gobble to every repetition of this sound, and can thus be approached with certainty about daylight, and easily killed.

“Wild turkeys are very tenacious of their feeding grounds, as well as of the trees on which they have once roosted. Flocks have been known to resort to one spot for a succession of years, and to return after a distant migration in search of food. Their roosting place is mostly on a point of land, jutting into a river, where there are large trees. When they have collected at the signal of a repeated gobbling, they silently proceed towards their nocturnal abodes, and perch near each other: from the number sometimes congregated in one place, it would seem to be the common rendezvous of the whole neighbourhood. But no position, however secluded or difficult of access, can secure them from the attacks of the artful and vigilant hunter, who, when they are all quietly perched for the night, takes a stand previously chosen by daylight, and, when the rising moon enables him to take sure aim, shoots them down at leisure, and by carefully singling out those on the lower branches first, he may secure nearly the whole flock, neither the presence of the hunter, nor the report of his gun, intimidating the turkeys, although the appearance of a single owl would be sufficient to alarm the whole troop: the dropping of their companions from their sides excites nothing but a buzzing noise, which seems more expressive of surprise than fright. This fancied security or heedlessness of danger, while at roost, is characteristic of all the gallinaceous birds of North America.

“The more common mode of taking turkeys is by means of *pens*, constructed with logs, covered in at top, and with a passage in the earth under one side of it, just large enough to admit an individual when stooping. The ground chosen for this purpose is generally sloping, and the passage is cut on the lower side, widening outwards. These preparations being completed, Indian corn is strewed for some distance around the pen, to entice the flock, which, picking up the grain, is gradually led towards the passage, and thence into the enclosure, where a sufficient quantity of corn is spread to occupy the leader until the greater part of the turkeys have entered. When they raise their heads and discover that they are prisoners, all their exertions to escape are directed upwards and against the sides of the pen, not having sagacity enough to stoop sufficiently low to pass out by the way they entered, and thus they become an easy prey, not only to the experienced hunter, but even to the boys on the frontier settlements.

“The Indians make much use of their tails as fans;

the women weave their feathers with much art on a loose web made of the rind of the birch-tree, arranging them so as to keep the down on the inside, and exhibit the brilliant surface to the eye. A specimen of this cloth is in the Philadelphia Museum; it was found enveloping the body of an Indian female, in the great Saltpetre cave of Kentucky.”

“The turkey is generally esteemed a stupid bird, and, in its tame state, perhaps with truth. Its vigilance and cunning in its native forests, however, often baffle the experience of well trained hunters; and the attention and cunning of the female are noted by Mr. Audubon. The attention of the male to the young is also, in some cases, extraordinary. We have known him regularly attend and protect the female and brood from dogs, or other intruders: and, in two instances, to take the sole charge upon himself, refusing to admit the female to any share of his cares. The same bird frequently drove the hen from her nest, and sat upon the eggs until hatched.

“Mr. Audubon relates a curious anecdote of the turkey, which also illustrates the disposition of the dog.

“While at Henderson, on the Ohio, I had, among many other wild birds, a fine male turkey, which had been reared from its earliest youth under my care, it having been caught by me when probably not more than two or three days old. It became so tame, that it would follow any person who called it, and was the favourite of the little village. Yet it would never roost with the tame turkeys, but regularly betook itself, at night, to the roof of the house, where it remained until dawn. When two years old, it began to fly to the woods, where it remained for a considerable part of the day, to return to the enclosure as night approached. One morning I saw it fly off, at a very early hour, to the woods, and took no particular notice of that circumstance. Several days elapsed, but the bird did not return. I was going towards some lakes near Green River to shoot, when, having walked about five miles, I saw a fine large gobbler cross the path before me, moving leisurely along. Turkeys being then in prime condition for the table, I ordered my dog to chase it, and put it up. The animal went off with great rapidity, and as it approached the turkey, I saw, with great surprise, that the latter paid little attention. Juno was on the point of seizing it, when she suddenly stopped, and turned her head towards me. I hastened to them, but you may easily conceive my surprise, when I saw my own favourite bird, and discovered that it had recognised the dog, and would not fly from it, although the sight of a strange dog would have caused it to run off at once.”



CHOIR OF THE DOMINICAN FRIARY, PORTUMNA; INTERIOR VIEW.

The flourishing town of Portumna is agreeably situated on the banks of the noble river Shannon, in the barony of Longford, and county of Galway. It has been greatly improved within these few years past, partly by the liberality of its noble owner, the Marquis of Clanricarde, and partly owing to the trade carried on by means of steam navigation. This must have been a place of no small note from a very